

Erweckung zur Umkehr: A Theology of Awakening
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To develop a theology of awakening is not an easy task. Biblical-theologically, the term *awakening* is strictly not a biblical term. Thus, we must look at biblical passages that are closely related to this topic. Systematic-theologically, *awakening* is considered dogmatic topic only in a very few representations of recent Protestant dogmatics. The discipline of Christian theology that usually discusses awakening or revival movement is the church history. This paper tries to engage with a theology of awakening, not only from historical-theological perspective, but also from biblical- and systematic-theological perspective. While the biblical perspective will include mostly the Four Gospels, Acts, and Pauline writings, the historical perspective will be limited in Reformed theological tradition. Finally, a systematic-theological perspective that draws from the thoughts of Wacker, Barth, and Welker will round off the paper.

Awakening in biblical-theological perspective

Although the term *awakening* is not strictly a biblical term, we can look at certain biblical passages that are closely related to this topic. We start with the synoptic gospels. In the Parable of the Ten Virgins, we find the motifs of sleeping (cf. Matt. 25:5). The parable is placed in Matthew's eschatological discourse. Caution should be exercised when we relate this passage with spiritual awakening. All the ten virgins fell asleep (25:5). Not only that, all of them also rose (25:7). Thus, awakening in this context should be understood as watching despite the 'delay' of the Parousia. What distinguishes the wise from the foolish virgins, the true- and the pseudodisciples (cf. Matt. 7:21–23) is preparedness or readiness in waiting for the coming of Jesus, the bridegroom.¹ The parable warns of the danger of spiritual sleep, not in the sense that the disciples should not fall asleep, but in the sense of unpreparedness for the coming of the kingdom.

A comparable story, though less developed and with different details, about being prepared for the coming of the "master" can be found in Luke 12:35–38. Instead of virgins who wait for the bridegroom, the relation in Luke is between servants and their masters. Here, we find the word "awake" in v. 37. Like in Matthew, Luke also wrote this passage in an eschatological context. The 'delay' of the Parousia is also reckoned in Luke when he wrote that if the master "comes in the second watch, or in the third, and finds them awake, ..." (12:38) and later in v. 45: "My master is delayed in coming." If the master's return (read: Parousia) is very late, then the preparedness of the servants is even more laudable.² Being found awake means being ready for the coming of the Son of Man (cf. 12:40).

Closer to what is meant by the term *awakening* is to be found in Peter's sermon at Pentecost. When we read the story of Pentecost, we find that in his sermon, Peter first connects Pentecost with Joel's prophecy (cf. Acts 2:17–21). Pentecost is the fulfilment of the long-awaited Old Testament prophecy. After witnessing Jesus, Peter rebukes his audience concerning their sin of lawlessness in crucifying/killing Jesus. Another Old Testament prophecy (by David) follows, before Peter then proclaims God's vindication of Jesus the righteous while again rebuking the sin of the audience: "Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified" (Acts 2:36).

The response of the audience is being convicted of their sin: "Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart" (Acts 2:37). This gives Peter the opportunity to present the gospel to his

¹ Cf. R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew* (= NICNT; Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2007), 947.

² Cf. Walter L. Liefeld, "Luke," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelain, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 966.

audience, inviting them to repent (cf. Acts 2:38). Spiritual awakening by the Holy Spirit is thus an experience of conviction of sin, which leads to true repentance/conversion. One of some important marks of awakening in the Pentecost is its honesty: "the call to repentance must be coupled with the rediscovery of truth."³ When the Spirit revives, he will bring convicted persons to be converted. Without heartfelt repentance, there is no true spiritual awakening. Yet, it is not the human repentance that brings awakening; rather, the Holy Spirit who convicts the world concerning sin (cf. John 16:8) and bestows true comfort to those whom He wills.

The movement from conviction of sin to comfort is a movement in God's self. It is not the product of human merit or initiative. Thus, in Isaiah, God's anger turned away and became comfort (cf. Is. 12:1). Motyer comments rightly when he says: "Reconciliation is not our willingness to have God but God's willingness to have us."⁴ The turning from divine anger to comfort can be found in Isaiah's vision. After being convicted of his sin, God took away his guilt and sin (cf. Is. 6:5–7). Isaiah was comforted. As true spiritual awakening takes place, the Holy Spirit will bring his people to the knowledge of their sin then comfort them with the gospel of forgiveness.

Unlike many modern churches who proclaim a helpless old loving god with no holiness, the God of the Bible is a holy God who does not tolerate sin at the expense of his attributes. There is always the danger of presenting a certain god of love without holiness, or a holy god without love and mercy. The first tends to antinomianism; the second to legalism. The antidote of legalism is "the most holy gospel of the glory and grace of God," which Luther called "the true treasure of the church."⁵ The antidote of antinomianism is the preaching of the law that presents the vision of God's holiness, which then leads to a deep conviction of sin as the work of the Holy Spirit (cf. John 16:8).

New Testament scholars debate over the meaning of the verb "convict" (*elenchō*). In classical Greek the range of meanings include "putting to shame, treating with contempt, cross-examining, accusing, bringing to the test, proving, refuting."⁶ Even the translation "to convict" can be interpreted by some scholars to view the Spirit as a prosecuting attorney on the courtroom. Carson notices a problematic reading here because in this sense, the Spirit is then proving the world's guilt to *the judge* instead of convicting *the world* concerning its guilt.⁷ Carson then proposes that the convicting work of the Spirit is graciously designed to lead human beings to recognize their guilt and their need of Jesus.⁸ In other words, the Spirit's convicting work is *both* to bring sinners to realize their sin *and* to lead them to the saving work of Christ. In spiritual awakening, there will be preaching of the law and preaching of the Gospel. The first humbles human beings in their sinfulness before God; the latter gives them true comfort in Christ's forgiveness.

In Pauline corpus, some biblical verses are worthy of discussion for a theology of awakening. The first one is 1 Thess. 5:6. Here, Paul related the Christian identity as children of light (5:5) to keeping awake and being sober. There is an intimate relationship between new Christian existence and new moral life, which fundamentally affects Christian ethics.⁹ Sleeping and getting drunk belong to the night (5:7). Paul understood being sober as "having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation" (5:8). Here, Paul used military metaphors, the source of which is Isa. 59:17, where God himself is portrayed as a soldier, who "put on righteousness as a breastplate, and a helmet of salvation on his head."¹⁰

³ Joel R. Beeke, "The Age of the Spirit and Revival," PRJ 2,2 (2010), 45.

⁴ J. Alec Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah: An Introduction & Commentary* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 128.

⁵ Luther, *The 95 Theses*, No. 62.

⁶ D. A. Carson, *The Gospel according to John* (= PNTC; Leicester, et al.: InterVarsity Press, 1991), 534.

⁷ Cf. Carson, *John*, 535.

⁸ Cf. Carson, *John*, 537.

⁹ Cf. Gene L. Green, *The Letters to the Thessalonians* (= PNTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 237.

¹⁰ Cf. Green, *Thessalonians*, 240.

Whereas in Isa. 59:17, God put on “righteousness as a breastplate,” in 1 Thess. 5:6 it is the “breastplate of faith and love.” God bestows his righteousness and human beings receives this righteousness through faith working through love. When God awakens, he will awaken human beings to faith that receives his righteousness. God’s righteousness in Christ is also the hope of our salvation (cf. 1 Thess. 5:8).

Another Pauline verse that touches on awakening can be found in Romans 13:11. In this verse, awakening is closely related to strong eschatological hope: “for salvation is nearer to us now than we first believed.” There are similarities with 1 Thess. 5 in that here Paul not only wrote about the eschatological hope of salvation, but also about “moral urgency in light of the eschaton.”¹¹ Also here, the night is understood as the realm of darkness that already belonged to the past while the (eschatological) day is approaching. This is not to say that the day is totally still in the future (*not yet*) so that Christians can only walk properly *as if* in the daytime, but rather that they are *already* in the day for this eschatological reality breaks through the here and now.¹² In 1 Thess. 5:8, Christians are to put on the breastplate of faith and love; here in Romans 13:11, they are to put on “the Lord Jesus Christ.” To be spiritually awakened means to partake, to have fellowship with the life of Jesus, which has negative implication of casting off the works of darkness or the desires of the flesh.

The contrast between taking part in the works of darkness and spiritual awakening is also addressed in Ephesians 5:11–14. As in Romans 13, the metaphor of light is also used to describe spiritual awakening. In the New Testament, images of both darkness and light often appear in association with conversion.¹³ In Ephesians, the conversion is from darkness which represents ignorance (4:18) to light which represents truth (5:9), walking wisely (5:15), and understanding the will of God (5:17). In the Old Testament, the image of light is used to describe the Lord’s salvation for his people.¹⁴ According to Eph. 5:14, spiritual awakening begins in the first place with God’s call which broke in upon sleepers; it is then followed by a demand to respond to arise from the sleep and death; in that response, Christ will shine graciously and powerfully on them. Spiritual awakening is thus both irresistible divine initiative and human response of conversion from darkness to light, from sleep to waking up, from death to life.

Awakening in (Reformed) historical perspective

The association between awakening and Reformed theological tradition is complex. On the one hand, the Reformed tradition teaches that Pentecost is once and for all,¹⁵ so that awakening is thus “something which is of the permanent essence of the New Testament age.”¹⁶ On the other hand, the inclination to expect larger measures of the Spirit is encouraged in the Reformed confession and catechism. Thus, in question 182 the Westminster Larger Catechism states that while the Spirit works by quickening the hearts of the believers, yet it is “not in all persons, nor at all times, in the same measure.”¹⁷ In other words, the Catechism leaves room for believers to pray for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in a greater measure than usual.

¹¹ Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, ed. Robert W. Yarbrough and Joshua W. Jipp, 2nd ed. (= BECNT; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2018), 676.

¹² Cf. Schreiner, *Romans*, 680.

¹³ See, for instance, Acts 26:18; Col. 1:12, 13; 1 Pet. 2:9; Heb. 6:4; 10:32; cf. Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians* (= WBC, vol. 42; Dallas: Word Books, 1990), 326.

¹⁴ See, for instance, Deut. 33:2; Ps. 50:2; 80:1–3, 7, 19; cf. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 332.

¹⁵ Cf. Abraham Kuyper, *The Work of the Holy Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956), 127.

¹⁶ Iain Murray, “The Necessary Ingredients of a Biblical Revival,” *Banner of Truth*, no. 184 (Jan. 1979), 20; cf. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *The Puritans: Their Origins and Successors; Addresses Delivered at the Puritan and Westminster Conferences, 1959-1978* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1987), 368.

¹⁷ WLC, Q/A 182.

To secure a place for awakening in the dogmatics, Reformed theology needs to free itself from the static inadequate notion of classifying someone as already or not yet a believer, though such differentiation might help in a certain case, and to discern the working of the Spirit in lesser or greater measure in different persons at different times and places. It is inadequate to operate only with the notion of the Spirit's omnipresence, though again, it might help in certain cases. Rather, we need to understand the context-sensitive presence of the Spirit, precisely because the Spirit can be quenched and grieved (cf. 1 Thess. 5:19; Eph. 4:30).¹⁸ The opposite of quenching and grieving the Spirit is seeking a greater outpouring of the Spirit, that is, an urgent prayer for spiritual awakening.

The prayer for spiritual awakening, however, is not always encouraged. Kathryn Teresa Long explains that the apparent loss of the revival instinct among Presbyterians after Edwards is due to the increasing discontinuation of the habit of praying for the Spirit's outpourings in successive revivals.¹⁹ The outpouring of the Spirit was understood as a one-time historical event at Pentecost with no repetition. Presbyterian theologians who supported revival such as Robert Fleming and John Howe, however, emphasized the "eschatological hope of successive outpourings of the Spirit," which had great effect on the Presbyterians even before Edwards.²⁰ This is coherent with the concept of "already but not yet" in Reformed eschatology. The Spirit has *already* been poured out at the Pentecost, but Christians still have to pray for the outpourings (plural!) of the Spirit. In a certain sense, spiritual awakening is a 'repetition' of the Spirit's working at Pentecost.

This is the reason why systematic-theologically, awakening is not only related to pneumatology but also to eschatology. The already initiated coming of the kingdom on earth does not negate the eschatological hope of its future coming in its full glory. From Edwardsean perspective, the Spirit can revive his church repeatedly throughout redemptive history. The hope for coming revivals connects with the understanding of the Millennium. To quote Long again:

The concept of increasing cycles or 'waves' of revivals that would mysteriously spread throughout the land was, in itself, not new. Such Calvinist apologists for revivals as Jonathan Edwards in the eighteenth century and Presbyterian William B. Sprague in the early nineteenth suggested the idea as a part of their historical analyses, particularly in connection with millennial thought.²¹

Edwards himself was a postmillennialist, i.e., he believed that revivals were central in redemptive history.

Speaking of millennial thought, it should be noted that the experience of time, especially accelerated time, played a central role in the context of end-time expectations. Koselleck mentions two kinds of opposite poles regarding this acceleration of time:

For Luther the shortening of time is a visible sign of God's will to bring about the Last Judgment, the end of this world. For Robespierre, to speed up time is the task of man, to herald the age of freedom and happiness, the golden future.²²

Many revivalists can be positioned either next to Luther who emphasized divine sovereignty or to the latter who put more emphasis on human instigation. There is always the danger of

¹⁸ Cf. Welker, *God the Spirit*, trans. John F. Hoffmeyer (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994), 281.

¹⁹ Cf. Kathryn Teresa Long, *Revival of 1857–58: Interpreting an American Religious Awakening* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 42; see also Robert Davis Smart, "Edwards's Revival Instinct and Apologetic in American Presbyterianism: Planted, Grown, and Faded," in *Ibid.* (Ed.), *Pentecostal Outpourings: Revival and the Reformed Tradition* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2016), 157.

²⁰ Smart, "Edwards's Revival Instinct," 137; see also Michael J. Crawford, *Seasons of Grace: Colonial New England's Revival Tradition in Its British Context* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 42–51.

²¹ Long, *Revival of 1857–58*, 16.

²² Reinhart Koselleck, "Vergangene Zukunft der frühen Neuzeit," in *Ibid.* (Ed.), *Vergangene Zukunft. Zur Semantik geschichtlicher Zeiten* (Suhrkamp-Taschenbuch Wissenschaft, Bd. 757), 4. ed. (Frankfurt am Main, 2000), 21f; cf. Thomas K. Kuhn, "Erweckungsbewegung und Chiliasmus. Konzepte und Diskurse aus der ersten Hälfte des 19. Jahrhunderts," in *Ibid.* (Ed.), *Zwischen Aufklärung und Moderne. Erweckungsbewegungen als historiographische Herausforderung* (= *Religion – Kultur – Gesellschaft. Studien zur Kultur- und Sozialgeschichte des Christentums in Neuzeit und Moderne*, Bd. 5; Münster: LIT-Verlag, 2017), 194–195.

viewing revival as conditional upon human effort and activity. In this view, revival can be regarded “as being virtually the same thing as a period of energetic evangelistic activity” and identified “with certain phenomena that could be produced at any time through the correct use of the right means.”²³ Those who follow the Reformational view, however, always put emphasis on the sovereign work of God. Revival is not something that can be instigated by human effort as if from God’s side, he always desires revival at any time but is somewhat hindered by disobedient Christians.

This is not to say that obedience, repentance, or conversion are not important. On the contrary, true repentance and total surrender are always insisted in the history of spiritual awakening. Theodorus Jacobus Frelinghuysen (1691–1747), described by many as a forerunner of the Great Awakening, proclaimed divine judgment according to the law of God, the inadequacy of human good works as a soteriological criterion, the sovereignty of God’s grace, and the necessity of spiritual regeneration to produce a life of godliness.²⁴ Spiritual regeneration is the prerequisite of true godliness, yet, it is not a prerequisite that can be fulfilled by humans, but depends entirely on the actions of God. Frelinghuysen used the preaching of the law to bring a sinner to recognize his sinful state until he “is driven out of himself to the sovereign grace of God in Christ for reconciliation, pardon, sanctification, and salvation.”²⁵ The Lutheran law-gospel dialectic was instrumental in the preaching of Frelinghuysen. His sermons were addressed to the church parishioners instead of to those outside of the church. In this case, we see that a revivalist is first and foremost a critic of religion (*Religionskritiker*) who practices self-criticism of the church. When God sends awakening, he will first rebuke the sinfulness of the church.

Frelinghuysen also emphasized the importance of context-sensitive preaching to different listeners. He advised: “Though I would not prescribe a method of preaching to anyone, yet I believe that the application should be discriminating, adapted to the various states of all hearers (Jude 20–21; Jeremiah 15).”²⁶ His discriminatory preaching is based on Jeremiah 15 and Ezekiel 13: “The church includes all kinds of people: wicked and unconverted persons, moral persons, and Christians in appearance and profession. ... There are also converted people in the church. ... Each has desires and needs. Each must therefore be preached to and dealt with according to his condition, as Jeremiah 15:19 says. Many zealous divines have shown how dangerous general applications can be (Ezek. 13:19-20).”²⁷ Frelinghuysen’s context-sensitive preaching greatly influenced Gilbert Tennent, whose instruction in turn greatly affected another revivalist George Whitefield in his method of preaching.²⁸

Awakening in systematic-theological perspective

The term *awakening* is usually not considered a dogmatic topic in most of the recent representations of Protestant dogmatics with a few notable exceptions.²⁹ One of them is Emil

²³ Murray, “The Necessary Ingredients of a Biblical Revival,” *Banner of Truth*, no. 184 (Jan. 1979), 184; see also Beeke, “The Age of the Spirit,” 37.

²⁴ Cf. Peter H. B. Frelinghuysen Jr., *Theodorus Jacobus Frelinghuysen* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1938), 63-64; see also Joel R. Beeke, “Revival and the Dutch Reformed Church in Eighteenth Century America,” in *Pentecostal Outpourings*, 235–36.

²⁵ Frelinghuysen, “The Poor and Contrite God’s Temple,” in Beeke (Ed.), *Forerunner of the Great Awakening: Sermons by Theodorus Jacobus Frelinghuysen (1691-1747)* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 16.

²⁶ Frelinghuysen, “Duties of Watchmen on the Walls of Zion,” in Beeke, *Forerunner of the Great Awakening*, 280.

²⁷ Frelinghuysen, “Duties of Watchmen on the Walls of Zion,” in Beeke, *Forerunner of the Great Awakening*, 280-81.

²⁸ Cf. Tanis, *Dutch Calvinistic Pietism in the Middle Colonies: A Study in the Life and Theology of Theodorus Jacobus Frelinghuysen* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1967), 80-81; see also Beeke, “Revival and the Dutch Reformed Church,” 240.

²⁹ Reinhard Deichgräber, Art. “Erweckung/Erweckungsbewegungen II,” TRE, 220.

Wacker who wrote a chapter of calling and awakening in his book *Ordo salutis*. Wacker distinguished between the calling (externally) heard and the calling accepted. In the latter awakening occurs.³⁰ Citing Eph. 5:14, Wacker explained that true revival already contains conversion but as a beginning, a seed of spiritual life.³¹ Though the whole person, including one's knowledge and will are touched in awakening, the most easily and quickly aroused side of human life is feeling.³²

Wacker carefully distinguished between true and false awakening. In the false awakening, one still somehow keeps to one's own righteousness and wants to be righteous through oneself. In the true awakening, on the contrary, a converted person has experienced the terror of conscience and the misery of sin, realizing that he/she is utterly corrupted in sin and incapable of being righteous.³³ Not only did Wacker apply the Lutheran law-gospel dialectic, but he also followed Luther's thought *simul iustus et peccator* when he wrote: "There is no truly awakened person who does not still have his sinful corruption hidden in many respects and in whom, unconsciously, there is still much self-righteousness."³⁴ The good news lies in the consolation that it can be regarded as essentially overcome whenever it emerges.

Self-righteousness is the crucial point that is hit by true awakening. If it is not struck to the heart, it will burst forth at once and settle in the new states where it can.³⁵ Wacker noticed the absence of true spiritual rest in false awakening. Mere feelings, which one does not get beyond, is very different with the true rest in Jesus, which calms the terror of the conscience.³⁶ Individual symptoms of false awakening can be recognized. One of them is indifference to Christian teaching and to the Scripture, which is made only superficially the guideline for teaching and life.³⁷

Wacker also calls the false states of awakening *emotional Christianity*. Although the work of the Spirit can be detected in the beginning, such emotional Christianity involves hypocrisy and touches upon other kinds of emotional religion, in which there is much less sense of the work of the Spirit.³⁸ Thus, in false awakening, we deal with syncretism between Christianity and other religions or ideological movements, which can successfully arouse or create emotional awakening. At the end of the chapter of calling and awakening Wacker sharply warned: "Where there is no longer any trace of the effects of the calling, be it general or specific, the souls sit in darkness and the shadow of death. ... The dead sea of unbelief is sweeping over this area."³⁹

Another exception of Protestant dogmatics who dealt with the term *awakening* in detail is Karl Barth in his *Church Dogmatics*.⁴⁰ Barth discusses the concept of awakening that leads to a discussion of conversion. He places the chapter on "the awakening to conversion" after a chapter on "the call to discipleship" under the discussion of "the sanctification of man." Systematically, Barth thus develops the spiritual awakening within the framework of his soteriology (doctrine of reconciliation). As Barth understands conversion within "sanctification," the awakening is meant also for Christian believers.

Due to their slothful nature, human beings are dragged downward, so that only the Spirit can miraculously give them the strength to lift up themselves to look to God.⁴¹ This spiritual lifting up characterizes real sanctification because it takes place in the fellowship with the life of

³⁰ Cf. Emil Wacker, *Ordo salutis. Die Heilsordnung* (Brekum: Christian Jensen, 1960), 30.

³¹ Cf. Wacker, *Ordo salutis*, 31.

³² Cf. Wacker, *Ordo salutis*, 32.

³³ Cf. Wacker, *Ordo salutis*, 33.

³⁴ Wacker, *Ordo salutis*, 34.

³⁵ Cf. Wacker, *Ordo salutis*, 35.

³⁶ Cf. Wacker, *Ordo salutis*, 36.

³⁷ Cf. Wacker, *Ordo salutis*, 36.

³⁸ Cf. Wacker, *Ordo salutis*, 39.

³⁹ Wacker, *Ordo salutis*, 40. Wacker's next (third) chapter deals with the illumination, the second stage of the order of salvation, to which true awakening should lead.

⁴⁰ See Barth, CD IV/2, ed. G. W. Bromiley & T. F. Torrance (London: T&T Clark, 2009), 553ff.

⁴¹ Cf. Barth, CD IV/2, 553.

Jesus.⁴² For Barth, it is the life of Jesus that assures the real sanctification more than its taking place in time and on earth. Historicity is not denied but relativized by the fellowship with Christ. This fellowship makes Christians wake up. Yet, they wake up not because of their own strength but because they are first awakened by the Spirit. Spiritual awakening makes “the counter-movement to the downward drag of their sinfully slothful being.”⁴³ Almost in the language of the Canons of Dordt, Barth understands spiritual awakening as God’s effective and irresistible working.⁴⁴

However, spiritual awakening is not only needed by unbelievers but also by Christians, “who constantly stand in need of reawakening and who depend upon the fact that they are continually reawakened.”⁴⁵ It is unfruitful to categorize Christians as being awake while non-Christians sleeping. Christians, too still struggle with the persistent downward movement resulting from their sloth. Like Luther with his *simul iustus et peccator*, Barth, too describes an anthropological realism concerning the universal need of spiritual awakening. Spiritual regeneration is the first awakening; however, this first awakening will not be the last in the lives of Christians. Barth quotes several biblical verses such as 1 Thess. 5:6; Rom. 13:11; Eph. 5:14; Mark 14:40; Matt. 25:5; Luke 12:37 to assert that there is such a thing as a sleeping Christianity, a Christianity which conforms to the world.⁴⁶

Spiritual awakening, as a miraculous act of God, is to be distinguished from any other awakening. Humanity can waken themselves from the sleep of errors or falsehoods perhaps by an accident or by an extraordinary event, but “from the sleep of covenant-breaking humanity,” there can be no awakening either by impulses, or movements, or reflections, except by a “direct act of God Himself.”⁴⁷ Barth again quotes several biblical verses (Luke 15:32; Eph. 5:14; 2:1f.; John 5:24; 1 John 3:14) to state that the sleep which needs to be awakened is the state of death.⁴⁸ Its analogy is no less than Christ’s resurrection from the dead. This again, is in line with the teaching of the Canons of Dordt which understood spiritual regeneration as “the raising from the dead, ... an entirely supernatural work, ... not less than or inferior in power to that of creation or of raising the dead.”⁴⁹

Using almost Chalcedonian Christological language, Barth insists to say that spiritual awakening “is both wholly creaturely and wholly divine.”⁵⁰ However, one must understand the co-ordination or co-operation (synergism) between the two carefully: the initiative comes from the divine so that the divine always has the absolute primacy over the creaturely. Does it mean that creatureliness is impaired? Barth emphatically answers no arguing that awakening takes place within the contexts of human historicity involving the total co-operation of the whole heart, soul, and mind.⁵¹ Far from being impaired, human creatureliness is even enhanced by being given a special character as an instrument of the divine. Since God himself is both its origin and goal, spiritual awakening remains “a mystery and a miracle.”⁵² In this regard, Barth’s

⁴² Cf. Barth, CD IV/2, 553.

⁴³ Barth, CD IV/2, 554.

⁴⁴ Cf. Barth, CD IV/2, 554. Of the Holy Spirit’s work in conversion, the Canons of Dordt teach: “by the effective operation of the same regenerating Spirit, God also penetrates into the inmost being, opens the closed heart, softens the hard heart, and circumcises the heart that is uncircumcised” and reject the error of those who teach that people “nevertheless can, and in actual fact often do, so resist God and the Spirit in their intent and will to regenerate them, that they completely thwart their own rebirth” (Canons of Dordt, III/IV.11; III/IV.2.8).

⁴⁵ Barth, CD IV/2, 555.

⁴⁶ Cf. Barth, CD IV/2, 554–55.

⁴⁷ Barth, CD IV/2, 555–56.

⁴⁸ Cf. Barth, CD IV/2, 556.

⁴⁹ Canons of Dordt, III/IV.12.

⁵⁰ Barth, CD IV/2, 557.

⁵¹ Cf. Barth, CD IV/2, 556.

⁵² Barth, CD IV/2, 557.

view on awakening agrees with what Iain Murray calls the “old-school view,” which views awakening as a special work of the Spirit with great need for supernatural intervention.⁵³

In line with Chalcedonian Christology which stresses the unity of the person of Christ, Barth also emphasizes the unity of spiritual awakening: we are not called to look first at God’s gift and work on the one level, then separately at the human task and action on the other; rather, spiritual awakening “is one event with one meaning and content.”⁵⁴ Moreover, spiritual awakening, according to Barth, is not a possibility but an actuality.⁵⁵ What is required of human is faith in God who actualizes this awakening. In the language of Luther, Barth can even say that “the reality of God stands or falls with the reality of this event.”⁵⁶ The belief in God is tightly united with the belief in spiritual awakening: if we truly believe in God, then we also believe in the human awakening to conversion; vice versa, we can only believe in the awakening if we believe in God.

After assuring the inseparable relation between spiritual awakening and theology proper, Barth then refers to the relation between awakening and ecclesiology. The Church is called to count on the awakening as the Scriptures also count on it. The church people should become witnesses of and constituted by this divine awakening for the awakening is a reality among the church. However, the reality of awakening determines positively or negatively the human existence because God’s speech and action are both judicial and gracious.⁵⁷ Despite its occasional failure, the Church can never ignore or forget the hope of awakening.

The closest topic to spiritual awakening in Welker’s pneumatology can be found in his discussion on “the forgiveness of sins and life reborn on the basis of God’s righteousness.”⁵⁸ If Wacker has warned of the absence of the effects of the calling, Welker similarly names “the creation of righteousness and of peace” as “the criteria for the action of the Spirit.”⁵⁹ Welker emphasizes the passivity of those who take part of this divine action. They cannot make happened or manage the Spirit’s action. On the contrary, they are “not only bearers, but ... borne. ... not only mediators, but also receivers.”⁶⁰

The passivity of the receivers is closely related to the uncontrollability of the Spirit’s action. The Spirit resists all human attempts to assert the power of “making it happen.” The biblical traditions call this awakening process and experience “rebirth.” Dialectically, rebirth leads to both discontinuity and continuity with the life lived before it. It leads to a discontinuity with the past life because rebirth gives a new beginning to life and a new identity; at the same time, rebirth also leads to a continuity because it restores one’s previous life and identity.⁶¹ Another dialectic of the Spirit’s action can be inferred from the fact that it is both characterized by the pouring out of the Spirit and defined by the complete selflessness and self-withdrawal acts of a public person.⁶² On the one hand, a process of mutual empowerment arises from the Spirit’s outpouring. On the other hand, sinners can entrust themselves to this spiritual renewal.

The spread of spiritual renewal is universal and connected to justice, mercy, and knowledge of God.⁶³ Barth also writes about “the fruit of righteousness, justice and mercy which grows out of the heart and soul and mind of a man who has been filled by the Holy Spirit” as the understanding of *vivificatio*.⁶⁴ Barth borrows the term from Calvin, who traditionally described

⁵³ Iain Murray, “The Necessary Ingredients of a Biblical Revival,” 20; cf. Beeke, “The Age of the Spirit,” 38.

⁵⁴ Cf. Barth, CD IV/2, 557.

⁵⁵ Cf. Barth, CD IV/2, 558.

⁵⁶ Barth, CD IV/2, 558.

⁵⁷ Cf. Barth, CD IV/2, 559.

⁵⁸ Welker, *God the Spirit*, 315–325.

⁵⁹ Welker, *God the Spirit*, 319.

⁶⁰ Welker, *God the Spirit*, 319.

⁶¹ Cf. Welker, *God the Spirit*, 320.

⁶² Cf. Welker, *God the Spirit*, 320–321.

⁶³ Cf. Welker, *God the Spirit*, 321.

⁶⁴ Barth, CD IV/2, 575.

repentance as *mortificatio* and *vivificatio*.⁶⁵ Vivification of the Spirit is never without the spread of justice, mercy, and knowledge of God, because these are “the weightier matters of the law” that cannot be neglected (cf. Matt. 23:23). However, these weightier matters of the law can be disregarded or even misused by the power of sin. The law can increase evil (cf. Rom. 5:20) and be misused based on selective perception, which in turn will lead to self-righteousness and works righteousness.⁶⁶

Against this helpless and hopeless yet realistic situation, the only hope of the effective spread of justice, mercy, and knowledge of God is to be found in the recognition of the power of the Spirit of “the God of love and peace” (2 Cor. 13:11), who “presses to realize the intentions of the law” and works toward their fulfillment.⁶⁷

Conclusion

While it is not easy to develop a theology of awakening, we can draw from the rich biblical traditions that intersect with this topic. In the Synoptic Gospels, spiritual awakening is placed in the eschatological context with the range of meanings of preparedness and readiness for the coming of Christ. In the Gospel of John, the Spirit’s work in convicting the world concerning its sin can be related to spiritual awakening which includes preaching of the law that humbles human beings in their guilt and preaching of the Gospel that bestows true comfort in the forgiveness in Christ. The Book of Acts understands the work of the Spirit in convicting sin as an awakening to repentance/conversion. Finally, in Pauline corpus, spiritual awakening is an awakening to faith that receives God’s righteousness, to fellowship with the life of Jesus, and to repentant response to irresistible divine initiative.

From historical perspective, we also observe the close connection between spiritual awakening and eschatological awareness, between the hope for revivals and the understanding of the Millennium. In the end-time expectations, the experience of accelerated time played a central role. Conviction of sin which leads to true repentance or conversion was always emphasized in the history of spiritual awakening. The law-gospel dialectic was instrumental in the preaching during the awakening. The Spirit works through the preaching of the law by convicting the world concerning sin and through the preaching of the gospel by bestowing true comfort in Christ.

From systematic-theological perspective, awakening occurs soteriologically either in the effective calling (Wacker), or as a prerequisite of true conversion (Barth), or in the rebirth on the basis of God’s righteousness (Welker). Self-righteousness is the crucial sin that is struck to the heart in true spiritual awakening. The Spirit convicts sinners concerning the sin of self-righteousness and leads them to receive Christ’s righteousness. This action of the Spirit is irresistible (Barth) or uncontrollable (Weber, Welker). The uncontrollability is closely related to the passivity of the human receivers. In his efficacious work, the Spirit assures the awakened persons to enter the fellowship with the life of Christ. In relation to Christology, spiritual awakening is also truly divine and truly human. It is both characterized by the initiative of the Spirit and involves the total co-operation of the whole human heart, soul, and mind (Barth), both characterized by the pouring out of the Spirit and defined by human complete selflessness and self-withdrawal acts (Welker). Negatively, the criterion of true awakening is the destruction of self-righteousness (Wacker); positively, its criterion is the creation of righteousness (Welker). Besides the spread of righteousness, true awakening is also accompanied with the spread of mercy and knowledge of God, for justice, mercy, and faithfulness are “the weightier matters of

⁶⁵ Cf. Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (= LCC; Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2011), III.3.3.

⁶⁶ Cf. Welker, *God the Spirit*, 255.

⁶⁷ Welker, *God the Spirit*, 256.

the law” (Matt. 23:23). The law can be misused by the power of sin; on the contrary, by the power of the Spirit, the law and its true intentions will be realized. When the Spirit works, he will awaken human beings to true conversion, to a life blessed and satiated with true righteousness, mercy, and true knowledge of God.